



# The Tufts Literacy Corps

## Journal Keeping

Writing about your work with children is a terrific way to deepen your understanding of your student, yourself as a teacher, and the process of tutoring. Journal writing will compel you to integrate the information you gain from articles and readings into your tutoring. It will also help you focus on aspects of tutoring that are particularly interesting or troublesome, and generate solutions to problems that may arise.

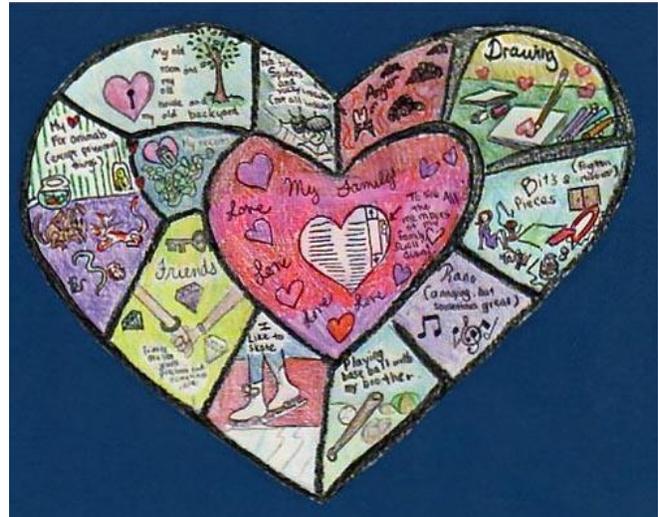
Journal writing can also help you build an understanding of how your work with the TLC fits into the broader scope of your life. What are the values that brought you to work with children this year? How do they relate to your goals for the future and your understanding of “civic identity?”

Each journal entry should cover one tutoring week (two sessions, if you do two a week; otherwise, one session). In the first part (The Sessions), please provide a quick overview of the week. Describe what you did and why, think about whether or not your plans were effective, and explain what you will be doing the following week. The “Reflection” section is your chance to take off and write. Answer the questions – but use them as a starting point for thinking. Feel free to move in a completely unrelated direction (as long as it seems pertinent to your work as a tutor). The reflection questions are intended to get you thinking, not to constrain your responses. If you have things to think and write about – and they have little to do with the questions – go ahead and write.

## Journal Entry 1

# Mapping Your Heart

In *Awakening the Heart*, Georgia Heard describes her efforts to help a class of third graders identify the stuff of their lives most worthy of poetry: the things they care most about. “Poets,” she told them, “write from their heart.” She explained that she wrote poems about her family, her growing up life and her travels. The children also shared their memories, and when she believed they understood the idea, Heard let them write.



The discussion had not worked. “Hunched over their papers,” the children wrote lines such as, “I like to play Nintendo after school. It’s really, really fun” and “Money, money, money is nice... ..I like money.” Most of the children wrote quickly, without much thought. “I didn’t sense much heartfelt poetry,” Heard writes. “I knew I had to do something drastic” (p. 108).

Heard’s “drastic solution” was to have children draw “maps of their hearts.” She told them to map all the important things that were “in their hearts,” all the things that mattered most to them: people and places, moments and memories, the things they loved to do and anything at all that stayed in their hearts because they cared a lot about it (p. 108).

Like the heart maps drawn by those third graders, yours should include the things that really matter to you. As you think about what to include, though, pay particular attention to events and memories connected to children and education. When you list the people at the center of your life, make sure to include anyone who has had an important impact on your education, or on your views of education. Think about the things you love to do, including those you would like to share with children this year. Don’t overlook details, like the smell of sunscreen in a summer swimming pool or the way you felt when you opened your college acceptance/rejection letters. Capture anything important that comes to mind and which you are comfortable sharing, particularly those things that seem relevant to the work you will be doing this year.

## Journal Entry 1 – Part II

# Reading Your Heart Map

When you have completed your map, go over it carefully and select the entries that helped shape your values with regard to children, education, community service and social justice. Use the rest of this page to write about these events and how they have influenced you. Are there particular events that contribute to your decision to work with children this year?

## Journal Entry 2

# Education and Me



Please write a ONE-PAGE introduction of yourself through the lens of your experience with education. You can approach this in any way you would like. For example, you may want to describe a particular event, possibly the first time you experienced the thrill of mastering a new skill, being transported by a book or helped by a teacher. Alternatively, you may want to describe the difference you experienced between classrooms in two or more countries. As long as the page is about you and school, it's fair game.

## Journal Entry 3

# Expectations

Before reading the articles on the Pygmalion effect in the classroom, think about your assumptions with regard to “expectations.” What is your experience with expectations? Who expected things from you? What were they? How were they communicated? Were they matched to your abilities? Too high? Too low? Just right? Do you have a sense of how you have internalized those expectations, so that they are now your own? How might the expectations you grew up with affect your work with children this year?

Use the space below to jot down your memories and thoughts of expectations. (There are, of course, no “right” answers to these questions. Their purpose is only to get you thinking.)

Now read the attached articles. Does anything surprise you? Do the readings coincide with what you already assume, or are they discordant? Do they leave you with new thoughts about the role of expectations in teaching and learning? Do they lead you to think differently about tutoring?

## Journal Entry 4

# The Sessions

*(Don't limit your answers to the spaces provided!)*

What did you do with your child this week?

Why did you do it (what was the purpose?)

Did it work? How did the child respond? Is it teaching your student what you want her to learn?

What's the plan for the next session?

### **Reflection:**

Describe your child freely. What does she look like? How did she behave during your first (or first few) sessions? Was she shy and reticent? Or did she jump right in and start telling you about anything and everything that ever crossed her mind? What do you know about her so far? How are you feeling about the prospect of working with this child all year?

Think about a time in which you were engaged in one-on-one learning from an adult. What was it like? Do you remember how it felt to receive special attention? How did it differ from being "one of many" in a classroom? Were there things you wish the adult knew or understood that would have made the experience better?